

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Alcohol impairment was responsible for 6.5% of all automobile crashes in the state of Wisconsin in 2000. It was also accountable for 38% of motor vehicle fatalities and 11% of all motor vehicle injuries. A disproportionate share of these impaired drivers was 21-to-34-year-old men living in rural areas where there are few, if any, public transportation options. In Wisconsin, bars and taverns often act as neighborhood social centers and inspire strong community loyalties. This project did not attempt to change this culture. Instead, it sought to help communities provide alternatives for people who have had too much to drink and then drive home safely.

The goal of this project was to decrease alcohol-related crashes by 5%. The target market was 21-to-34-year-olds, with special emphasis on single men. It was based on social marketing concepts, which borrows from commercial marketing techniques used to motivate consumers to try new products.

Commercial marketers realize that to entice people into trying a new product, the product must be appealing and serve a need. It must succeed in a competitive marketplace where consumers have free choice amongst the various offerings of the marketplace. If the “need,” in the case of the *Road Crew* project, is for people to arrive home safely after excessive drinking, “appealing” transportation options must exist. As with commercial products, the consumer has a choice to drive drunk or to use alternative means. As a result, the program needed to provide benefits that exceeded those from driving drunk.

Working from this conceptual base, planners conducted extensive product research to develop transportation options that would allure consumers and then worked with local communities to adapt research to local opportunities and constraints. The resulting programs have now been running for over a year with great success. This report describes the process, the service, and evaluation of the project.

Program History

RESEARCH PRECEDING PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

In 2000, extensive focus group research was used to develop an in-depth description of a 21-to-34-year-old man to better understand what motivated him to drink to excess and then drive home. Focus group participants were also asked to suggest ideas for alternative and appealing transportation options.

One insight gleaned from these discussions was that people couldn’t drive home impaired if they didn’t drive themselves to the bar in the first place. Separating consumers from their car before leaving their homes would prevent impaired persons from driving home after a night of drinking. A second insight was that while many people drove after excessive drinking, they tended to worry about it excessively as well. This anxiety distracted them from an otherwise enjoyable evening of camaraderie.

PROGRAM DEVELOPMENT

In 2001, the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration (NHTSA) funded a proposal from the Wisconsin Department of Transportation/Bureau of Transportation Safety (WisDOT/BOTS) to apply social marketing techniques to community collaborations aimed at reducing drunk driving. Additional project partners included the University of Wisconsin School of Business, Miller Brewing Company, and the Tavern League of Wisconsin. The goal of the NHTSA project was to reduce alcohol-related crashes

by 5% and create self-sustaining ride service programs. The project operated from July 1, 2002 to June 30, 2003.

After receiving the NHTSA grant, the project team invited community representatives from across the state to attend a daylong training conference. Participants were given an introduction to social marketing techniques, a copy of the focus group research, and resources to support their efforts in developing a coalition and ride program. Fifteen communities attended the session and seven submitted proposals for funding. Four proposals were selected and three communities developed programs that have been running successfully for over a year.

An effective strategy for beginning this effort was helping communities develop broad-based coalitions representative of many different organizations, individuals, and points of view. In addition, each community was asked to develop an advisory board of 21-to-34-year-old men to be involved in all stages of development.

State-level *Road Crew* staff provided technical assistance on a wide range of issues. Site visits, phone calls, and daylong conferences were key components of the on-going support provided to communities. The conferences allowed representatives from grant sites to meet, exchange ideas and lessons learned, provide progress reports, think about long-term sustainability, and celebrate successes.

IMPLEMENTATION

Communities were given resources to develop their own programs within guidelines. Local decisions were made with respect to the type of vehicles, paid or volunteer drivers, days and times of operation, routes, pricing and promotions, among others. One community worked to expand an existing cab service and two communities used limousines. This latter alternative gave instant status and prestige to the program, proving to be an excellent choice for an alternative ride option.

- The novelty was its own incentive for people who had never ridden in a limo.
- With the *Road Crew* logo on the side, the vehicles created their own publicity.
- For a target market concerned about image, limos were seen as a cool choice.
- The target market liked to socialize with groups of friends and needed to fit in, and limos provided an environment for them to do so.

BRANDING

Planners recognized the need to develop an appealing name, logo, and identity for the program, along with promotional materials that would resonate with the target market. While the program would provide a tangible service with tested benefits to capture their minds, an emotional sell was required to capture their hearts. An advertising agency was hired to create a consistent set of messages that were provided to communities for local customization. Input was solicited from community leaders and the target market on a range of ideas presented by the agency. The results were the “*Road Crew, Beats Driving*” advertising, logo and slogan, which convey the “no hassle” theme of fun and convenience. A *Road Crew* poster won a local advertising award.

MARKETING CHALLENGES

Meeting marketing challenges – creating awareness, developing favorable attitudes, and then getting both trial and consistent repeat behavior, all within one year – was difficult because well-established behavior patterns had to be broken. Although research had shown that opportunities to intrude into the market existed, the target was happy with its current behavior.

BUILDING A COALITION

Leaders were asked to build a community coalition representing a variety of local voices to steer an effort that included private and public sector partners. Perhaps most intricate were the partnerships that included tavern owners, young people who often drank to excess, law enforcement, public health workers, and community leaders. Developing the programs required both small business and marketing acumen. In two out of the three communities, the transportation option was completely new and required organizers to put together a business plan. Grants provided funds to hire part-time coordinators for up to 18 months.

RESULTS

The project developed three phases to conduct research in support of the project and document the results. Phase one included the focus groups described above. Phase two, focused on levels of drinking and driving prior to the demonstration onset, included:

- A pre-test survey conducted with bar patrons in demonstration and control communities to learn the level of driving after excessive drinking that existed prior to the onset of the program.

Phase three, conducted after the ride services had been operational for one year, included:

- A post-test conclusion to the survey. This part of the research completed the pre- and post-test with treatment and control group design, considered to be the most rigorous way to determine a causal relationship.
- A phone survey to determine awareness and attitudes toward the program was conducted to the target group, general population, community leaders, bar owners, and wait staff.
- A ride count, each ride representing the prevention of an alcohol-related crash.

Results of the *Road Crew* project significantly exceeded NHTSA's expectations.

- 19,757 rides were given to potential drunk drivers from July 1, 2002 through June 30, 2003. Rides are estimated to have prevented 15 alcohol-related crashes on area roads, a 17% reduction.
- The average cost of an alcohol-related crash in Wisconsin is approximately \$56,000; the cost to avoid an crash in this program was about \$15,300.
- There was no decrease in the percent of patrons who admitted to drinking and driving, but there was a significant drop in the frequency of occurrences per person compared with control group behavior.
- Awareness in the general community was 68%; it ranged from 70-100% in the other groups.
- Among those who were aware of the program, over 80% surveyed had positive feelings, and nearly half of those aware perceived a decrease in driving after excessive drinking in the community.
- Among bar patrons, there was no observable increase in consumption compared to control communities. However, there was an increase in the number of bars visited.
- Community leaders felt that the program should continue. The projects are likely to be sustainable, with plans in place to continue the programs for the next year.

The *Road Crew* project succeeded for a number of reasons:

- Most people are aware that they should not be driving after excessive drinking, but often there is no opportunity for them to behave otherwise. *Road Crew* provided such an opportunity.
- The program was predicated on sound research, which is not always available.
- The target saw the ride service as cool so it was easy for them to begin to use it. By meeting the target's needs, *Road Crew* was able to meet the community's need to reduce crashes.

- There were champions in the communities committed to the project, who dedicated enormous energy to developing programs that worked.

CONCLUSION

This project demonstrated success in creating public/private partnerships that work, and state/local partnerships that maximized resources to make a difference. The *Road Crew* project exceeded NHTSA's goal of a 5% reduction in crashes in a cost-efficient manner while gaining widespread support in its target communities. Project leaders are confident that the work shown here can be replicated in virtually any small community in the United States; the model is not relevant just to Wisconsin.

ROAD CREW PROJECT TIMELINE

This report reflects roughly three years of research and planning on the part of WisDOT/BOTS and the University of Wisconsin School of Business. This project was funded by NTSHA in the second and third years. There was a steep learning curve in creating and implementing this approach. While the toolbox and technical assistance offered in conjunction with this program were invaluable to communities, for any community to have a sustainable, well-accepted program in place would require much more than the one-year time frame reflected in this report.

| DATE | OUTPUT |
|-----------------------------|---|
| May 2000 – December 2000 | Focus groups (seven with expert observers, 11 with target) |
| January 2001 – July 2001 | Program launch in two pilot communities explored, but not implemented due to lack of funding and other problems |
| October 2001 | WisDOT/BOTS receives NTSHA grant |
| October 2001 – January 2002 | Statewide planning conference organized, <i>Call For Proposals</i> distributed, and toolbox written |
| January 2001 | Statewide-planning conference held |
| February 2002 | Proposals due |
| March 2002 | Winning communities notified |
| March – June 2002 | Communities plan program, hire coordinators |
| April 2002 | Kick-off meeting for grantees |
| June 2002 | Pre-project data collection |
| June 2002 | First community begins offering rides |
| July 2002 | Second community begins offering rides |
| Sept 2002 | Third community begins offering rides |
| October 2002 | First <i>Lessons Learned</i> conference |
| November – December 2002 | Fourth community begins and ends service |
| June 2003 | Post-project data collection |
| July 2003 | Research period ends |
| July 2003 – September 2003 | Communities discuss sustainability issues |
| September 2003 | Final <i>Lessons Learned</i> conference |